







In a short span of two months, Khin Boon and his associate had garnered connections with companies and entities willing to transfer or supply material that could be upcycled. Community centres began donating wooden benches, which would be taken

"new" raw material.

With this material in its inventory, Touchwood has been able to carry out its social enterprise endeavours. These are primarily workshops in woodworking, as well as demonstrations in turning the wood pieces into functional objects. The workshop's classes, which include theoretical and practical lessons on wood joinery, and craft courses in

apart and treated, then turned into

ingapore's upcycling scene has been burgeoning of late with the help of a thriving, eco-conscious design community. Upcycling refers to the act of reusing and renewing discarded items and materials, and transforming them into polished, bespoke goods that are of a higher value or quality than they originally were. Consumers and creative folk the world over have increasingly embraced this method of production as a design technique, but how has Singapore approached the movement? I visited three local businesses to find out more.

My first stop is Touchwood Workshop based at Kampung Kampus (KK), a space created by the Ground-Up Initiative (GUI), CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: Woodworking activities in progress at Touchwood Workshop; a simple wood craft item; a wooden architectural model a social enterprise collective.
Touchwood, along with four
other tenants that work on their
own initiatives, make up the KK
community. Together they embody
and enact the GUI philosophy of
green living, grounded in gratitude,
and rethinking and strengthening
the links between man and nature
– themes that echo the motivations
behind the upcycling process.

Touchwood is KK's only enterprise based on craft skills. Yah Khin Boon, a former social worker, opened the workspace in August with a friend, with the objective of instilling a culture of patience, endurance and love for hands-on work, while giving back to the community. They chose to breathe new life into unwanted but useable material through carpentry.

GETTING INTO GEAR



making foosball tables, enable the community engagement that's aligned with the GUI's philosophies. But it's a different aspect of the business that translates Touchwood's advocacy of a culture of patience and appreciation. In a society blighted by wasteful consumerism, the positive effects of upcycling come through more clearly in the workshop's bigger projects, which communicate its practicality and sustainability.

This is where Touchwood's most recent partnership comes into play – the workshop has linked up with a company that supplies pallet wood to construction sites. As part of the company's social responsibility scheme, a portion of used pallets will be contributed to the workshop, giving Touchwood access to material that can be used for larger-scale projects.

As a result, Khin Boon and company have been able to work with homeowners to create items that range from neat home-décor items to larger pieces of furniture. One of Touchwood's biggest commissions to date is an entire staircase made from varying shades of recycled wood.

Despite his firm's growing reputation, Khin Boon remains humble about his early achievements. "Nothing should go to waste. These upcycling commissions are not my main objective, but if they help send across the message that we need to refresh the way we utilise and dispose perfectly good material, then I'm in," he says.



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Triple Eyelid is another promising name in local upcycling. A studio led by founder and design director Jackie Tan, two years ago it grew out of a partnership between Jackie and XCEL Industrial Supplies, a logistics company with a surplus of wood pallets. In order to clear storage space, XCEL donates the stackable wood to be repurposed.

It's a win-win arrangement – XCEL provides Jackie with a studio

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: One of the many odds and ends in the Touchwood workspace; Touchwood founder Yah Khin Boon (right) and his associate; Touchwood hosts a craft workshop for pre-school students space that comes with a storage area and a wood treatment facility, and Jackie works with two others to turn the pallets into furniture. In the process, he gets to build and manage his own design brand. It's the perfect fit for the 28-year-old advocate of environmental sustainability, who also has a

"We're lucky to have all this wood at our disposal," he reflects.
"But design aesthetics are integral

degree in environmental design.

THREE SINGAPORE OUTFITS OFFERING UPCYCLED GOODS

Kowalieu

This quirky online shop turns used snack packaging into handmade bags and pouches. Designs take the form of Kit Kat wrappers and familiar potato chip packets. instagram.com/kowalieu

Carpenter and Cook

This café doubles as a vintage furniture shop. Everything on display is for sale, including the tables that are dined on, and the typewriters and vintage armoires that decorate the space. 19 Lorong Kilat, #01-06; carpenterand cook.com

Second Charm

This boutique and design studio offers a huge selection of original, mid-century furniture. It also specialises in furniture restoration and reproduction, and is equipped to create custom orders.

21 Kallang Ave, #05-165 Mapletree Industrial Building; secondcharm.net



•• Repairing, upgrading and reusing old things is a culture in itself

to the work that we do – our main objective has been to reduce waste, but that challenge has changed slightly. We now need to increase our output of well-made, practical products so that we can keep up with the constant flow of material coming our way."

Triple Eyelid has already achieved milestones – more local brands, as well as private clients and homeowners, have approached the studio for commissions and collaborations. One of Jackie's favourite projects was a teamup with local independent linen label Kamilinen, to construct a linen rack and a copper-plywood high table-and-chair set for a craft-loving family. Notably, Triple Eyelid also featured at the

2015 Green Living event, a largescale eco/sustainable lifestyle convention at Marina Bay Sands, as an exhibitor – the company also designed the official event logo.

Jackie is now experimenting with 3D furniture fittings - made of plastic - in what he calls a merging of "old-fashioned craft work with new technologies". More fine-tuning is needed in the marrying of the plastic and wood materials, but Jackie hopes one day to open up his studio to share his 3D blueprints, and offer the use of his industrial tools and machines - all with the aim of extending the reach of the sustainability of upcycling. "Repairing, upgrading and reusing old things is a culture in itself," he says.



TOP LEFT
TO RIGHT:
Triple Eyelid founder
and design director
sits on a stack
of wood pallets;
some Triple
Eyelid creations; a
copper-plywood chair
is being given its
finishing touches

GETTING INTO GEAR

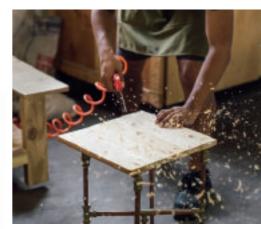
UPCYCLING DIRECTORY

Ground-Up Initiative 91 Lorong Chencharu, Kampung Kampus; groundupinitiative.org

Touchwood Workshop 91 Lorong Chencharu, Kampung Kampus; touchwoodgui.weebly.com

Triple Eyelid19 Tai Seng Ave, #05-01;
tripleeyelid.com

Hock Siong & Co. 153 Kampong Ampat, #01-03 Junjie Industrial Building; hocksiong.com.sg



From the young start-ups that are Touchwood and Triple Eyelid, I come upon Hock Siong & Co., a long-standing company that has embraced reusing, recycling and, now, upcycling. Established in the '70s by Toh Chin Siong, Hock Siong began as a simple *karung guni* (rag-and-bone men) operation in which unwanted newspapers, clothes and other household items were bought from heartland residents, and resold or recycled.

The business has had its moments of transition through the years. From collecting material and selling them, it now receives deliveries of items that can be reconditioned and then sold. On top of upcycling and selling products, which has become its